

Durham Cultural Advisory Board
PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE

Meeting, January 28, 2014, 8:00 a.m.
Rand Board Room, Durham Arts Council

MINUTES

Members Present:

☐ Joanne Andrews
☒ Kathy Bartlett
☒ Sherry DeVries
☐ Steven Gatlin
☒ Heather Gordon
☒ Lucy Grant
☒ Mark Hough
☒ Noel James
☒ Jessica Moore
☒ Chris Ogden
☐ Kenneth Rodgers
☐ Karen Slotta

OEWD Staff Present:

☒ Peter Coyle

Also Present: Lisa Miller, Dan Ellison, Chris Beacham, Jean Greer

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mark Hough at 8:04 a.m.

Kathy Bartlett made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 17 meeting. Noel James seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Peter Coyle reported that the Board of County Commissioners would be voting on February 10 on a recommendation by the County staff that the Civil Rights Mural be installed on the west wall of the Durham Convention Center, a facility jointly owned by the City and County. If the Commissioners approve the recommendation, a similar recommendation will be submitted to the City Council in early March.

In response to a question from Hough, Coyle reported that the locations for installation of works for the Bull City Sculpture Show have been identified by the sponsor. The approval process for the locations has begun.

Sherry DeVries introduced North Carolina Arts Council staff member Chris Beacham and SmART Grant consultant Jean Greer. Greer is working on the development of a Durham SmART Grant project visioning documents and on a draft for a national RFQ for a design team for the project. The executive team of the Durham SmART Grant project

group will review the RFQ. Hough asked about funding to pay for the design team. DeVries reported that the question is under discussion and that public and private funding will be sought.

Beacham indicated that a phase two SmART Grant could be up to \$30,000, with matching funds required, so potentially \$60,000 could be available from those sources. He noted that the match could include in-kind services, for staff time and other items, so the total cash available could be lower. DeVries noted that Durham Arts Council staff time to administer the grant counts toward the matching requirement. She also reported that the DAC has made a preliminary application for a grant from the Arts Place, a consortium of major charitable foundations. She is waiting to hear if the DAC will be accepted to submit a full grant application to the program.

Beacham reviewed the projects underway for all five municipalities which received SmART Grants in the first cycle. In addition to Durham, these include Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Burnsville and Wilson.

Greer reported that she began her consulting project in November, 2013 and has been meeting with local organizations and officials. She will be meeting in the future with the City Manager. She noted that the City needs to be seeking ways to get transformative major works of appropriate scale to the surrounding buildings and sites. She warned against “plop art;” smaller works that are not place-specific and add little to the sense of place of an area. Works that are site-specific and reflect the local community and their locations should be the goal.

Beacham noted that the Blackwell/Foster/Corcoran Street project, on which the first SmART Grant project will be focused, needs to address more than public art. He noted the need for better and more user-friendly way-finding signage. When consultant Wendy Feuer visited earlier in the project and walked the corridor, the group was stopped twice by visitors trying to find the Durham Bulls Athletic park in a matter of a few minutes.

Greer and Beacham described some successful projects in Charlotte and other cities, which add transformative effects. Greer discussed the need for a career professional in public art, with knowledge of materials, risk issues, conservation issues and other matters as key to a successful public art program.

Kathy Bartlett talked about the need for a “tough skin” to resist pressure and the need for sufficient funding for a quality program. She noted that while public input should not trump artistic decisions, there is a need for public comment and for public buy-in of the program. Chris Ogden commented that works must be “part of the community.”

In response to a question from Ogden, DeVries described the make-up of the project group and the constituencies represented.

Heather Gordon reported on her research on the inventory project software options. Dan Ellison reported that the Duke Media and the Arts program is working on a Durham

Visualization project – a location-based internet project similar to one that Duke had done in Venice, Italy. They will be doing Durham next. Bartlett suggested that the professor leading that project be invited to a future Public Art Committee meeting.

Gordon suggested that the inventory project be expanded to include artistically significant buildings and noted Cocoa Cinnamon as an example. She noted that the objectives of the inventory project should include the creation of an archival web-based system, a mobile app with geo-mapping, a walking tours feature and web based entry for administration. She discussed software options including open source software and purchasable systems.

“Collective Access” is an open-source, multilingual option to inventory cultural assets, including restaurants and other things. It has been used by the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Chicago Film Archives and other major users. She gave an example of Nova Muse, which integrates 52 museums and their collections into its database, with hundreds of thousands of objects.

Gordon suggested that we work with DCVB on integration and funding and seek other partners, including the Pauli Murray project, the Durham Civil Rights Heritage Project, the Center for Documentary Studies and Preservation Durham. The project will need a system administrator, collection access system designs, fact sheets for each program, a feedback mechanism and integrated databases.

James noted that while software might be free there will still be costs in money and time. Hough stressed the goal of getting something in place in time for the Bull City Sculpture Show, which starts May 1, 2014, then keep building.

Ogden reported that DCVB has been asked to provide web support and that there are three main components: Technology, Maintenance and content. Collecting and updating the content will be the hardest part. He added that promoting the site, so that it will get actual use at a level justifying the project is the other key element.

Gordon recommended that we continue to investigate Collective Access as it is a free use system and other systems could cost as much as \$30,000 to purchase, with additional annual costs. Bartlett suggested that Collective Access would be a good start as a pilot project. If the program grows beyond its capabilities we can look in the future of a purchasable alternative. Hough will arrange for Gordon to do a presentation for the Cultural Advisory Board.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.